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SUBJECT: FARAH PROVINCE: IMPROVING DEVELOPMENT BUT WORSENING
SECURITY AND WEAK GOVERNANCE LEAD TO MIXED RESULTS

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The level of development improved in Farah even as security worsened. Security in Farah province deteriorated in late 2007 with insurgent attacks in several districts beginning in the province's east, then westward in an arc across the province's southern border to Farah city and north into Herat. The United States and Iran are important contributors of aid. Governance at all levels from the governor down to the districts is ineffective. End Summary.

SECURITY

¶2. (SBU) Although the number of "significant acts" against Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and Coalition Forces (CF) has remained at approximately the same level for the past 18 months, the overall security situation in the province has declined dramatically as insurgents have sought to expand their influence westward. In November, an estimated 300 insurgents, many of them believed to be foreign fighters from Helmand, took over Gulestan district, raised their flag and occupied it for more than a week before Afghan National Security Forces, with belated Coalition Forces' help, were able to reestablish government control. Insurgents also attacked Bakwa, Khaki Safed, Pusht Rod, and Delaram districts, although they were unable to hold these districts. Since the initial incursions in November, insurgents have launched several repeat attacks against each of these districts. The insurgents may attempt to establish eastern Farah as a launching point for operations in nearby Ghor and Herat.

¶3. (SBU) The Afghan National Police (ANP) continued to be a weak presence in Farah. Although a new police chief and the Focused District Development (FDD) process provide hope for improvement, the ANP lack adequate manpower, training, and leadership. President Karzai's appointment of General Sheerzai Khyalbaz as ANP Chief in late November brings better leadership at the provincial level, but police at the district level frequently suffer from a lack of leadership, as many district commanders are junior officers or soldiers. In Bakwa, Bala Baluk, and Khaki Safed districts, ANP soldiers instead of officers lead the district police; and although a Colonel leads the Gulestan ANP, he is widely suspected of collaborating with the Taliban. The ANP suffered heavy losses in their late 2007 encounters with the Taliban and are presumed to be severely intimidated, evidenced subsequently by police units abandoning their stations after receiving phoned threats from

insurgents. The police are undermanned in light of the declining security situation, with approximately 1200 police, 70 percent of whom can be accounted for in person.

DEVELOPMENT

14. (U) Although the level of development in Farah improved in 2007, few development organizations and NGOs operate in the province due to security concerns. However, private new construction projects are increasing in Farah city, and Farah has made clear gains in educational opportunities. In the past year, the PRT has funded five high schools and a School of Excellence that will provide religious and secular higher education. Farah also has an agricultural high school, a women's dormitory and nursing/midwife training facility, a teacher training institute, and a women's education center. The PRT contributed over USD 4 million to the development of Farah in 2007 through CERP funds, and USAID is implementing over USD 1.5 million in projects over the next several months.

15. (SBU) Funding from non-U.S. sources also played a critical role in Farah's development. Iran is funding a 120-km road, currently in the survey stage, from the Iranian border into Farah city. The Iranian government will also build a customs station on both sides of the border. Indian engineers have begun the USD 35-million, 18-month survey for the Bakshabad dam project, a World Bank project that will provide water and electricity to Farah when completed over the next decade.

GOVERNANCE

16. (SBU) Governor Baluch has delivered a lackluster performance in the areas of poppy eradication, leadership, and concern for his

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citizens. Governor Baluch says the right things about poppy eradication but has a poor eradication record. The population believes he is deeply corrupt, and he has done nothing to dispel allegations of his corruption or involvement in the drug trade. He seldom visits the districts and only supports development projects that will benefit him, paying no attention to the needs of districts further away from Farah city. Baluch appears to be nervous about his job and recently has attempted to demonstrate to the PRT Commander and PRToff that he is on top of the security situation in Farah.

17. (SBU) District administration is a clear weak spot in Farah. Currently Bakwa and Gulestan, the most volatile districts in the province, lack district leaders. In Delaram, the brother of the last district manager, whom insurgents assassinated in early December, is administering the district unofficially. Although the other districts of Farah do have district managers, it is often in name only. In Lashwa Juwayn, ShibKoh, Pusht Rod, and Khaki Safed, the district managers work only once or twice a month, and the district manager in Khaki Safed is illiterate. The new ANP Chief visited each district in Farah upon his arrival and found that only two districts - Ana Dara and Purchamon - had managers who were performing their jobs.

18. (SBU) Despite lack of adequate coordination and resources, many ministry line directors perform their jobs reasonably well. The Directors for Health and Education work closely with the PRT, are well qualified, and care about their jobs. The Director for Women's Affairs speaks to the PRT often and expresses good intentions, but she does not translate ideas into action. The Director of Women's Labor has cooperated with the PRT on a number of projects and has a good relationship with the women of Farah. The Director for Refugees and Repatriation, a critical position considering the number of deportees returning from Iran, does not have many resources but has reached out effectively to NGOs and Kabul for assistance. Although the line directors meet monthly as part of the Provincial Development Council, the different sectors have only held one round of sectoral meetings since the creation of the Provincial Development Plan in summer 2007.

19. (SBU) The Provincial Council (PC) has an effective relationship

with the people of Farah, but is intensely frustrated because of the lack of respect the Governor and other parts of the government give it. Although many people in Farah keep their local disputes and problems within the tribal system, the PC has earned their trust, and they turn to the PC for dispute resolution and problems involving the government. One area where the PC could improve is in outreach to the district managers and engagement with the Provincial Development Committee to ensure that the development needs of districts far from Farah City are considered.

WOOD